

Cricket

By: Javid Lateef

I believe that Test Cricket is at death's doorsteps. I am currently watching the first Test match between England and South Africa. It is the 5th day and the match is teetering towards a tame draw. The stands are half full ... and that too at Lords, the most hallowed of all cricket fields. Test Cricket can be an enthralling contest between two sides, provided there is a sporting wicket to play on. This particular test match has already seen four individual scores of 150+, and though England bowled South Africa out pretty cheaply in the first innings and made them follow on, they have batted almost 2 full days for the loss of only 3 wickets!

Sub-continent Test cricket can be this boring too; with the exception of the minefield turners we subject visiting teams to, when we desperately need a win. With the advent of 20/20 cricket, even the traditional (how funny is this ... a decade ago the pundits frowned upon limited overs cricket of the 50 over version and now it's 'traditional') 50 over game is losing spectators. The reason being, the middle overs in the 50 over game are usually about consolidation, not losing wickets, and moving the score along. So, for a good 20 overs, one is subjected to singles, twos and very defensive



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bowling and fielding.

Now think about this, today's audience doesn't have the patience to sit through 20 overs of a 50 over game, and you want them to continue to support the 5 day version? I think not. I believe in the near future, that teams that are touring will play no more than 2 test matches and the tickets for these games will be highly discounted.

I had briefly touched upon *Mohammed Asif* and his propensity for getting himself into dope related charges. The IPL had done an illegal substance check on all players and had sent the samples to an independent laboratory in Switzerland. The results came back and out of all the players in the IPL, one had tested positive- *Mohammed Asif*. He, of course, as usual, denies any wrong doing, but as the old adage goes, there can be no smoke without fire. It looks like the end of the road for this cricketer who promised so much.

The other issue that needs to be mentioned here is the fact that there is just too much cricket being played right now. *M S Dhoni*, who is one of the fittest cricketers on the Indian side, has opted out

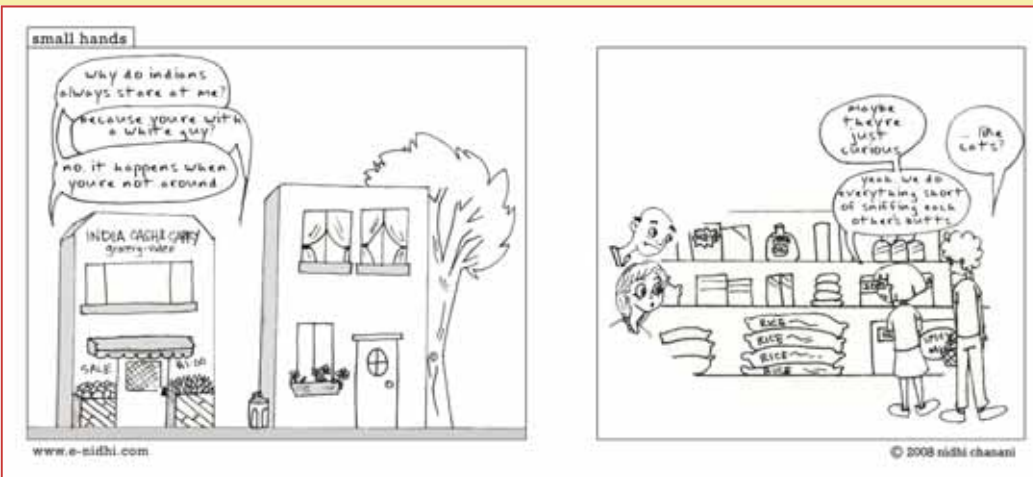


Ajantha Mendis

of the Sri Lankan tour and cited mental and physical fatigue as the reason. I think we will see more of this and a rotation policy will need to come into effect so that the players don't get all worn down and injury prone.

Looking forward to the Sri Lankan tour and young *Ajantha Mendis*, who is quite an unorthodox spinner and seeing how the Indian batting might cope with him. Till next time ... signing off for now.

Cartoon Strip



By Nidhi Chanani

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